

No. 18

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ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY



JACK LIGHTFOOT'S DILEMMA OR A TRAITOR ON THE DIAMOND



BY MAURICE STEVENS

Attacked on all sides the bull became dazed, and was speedily subdued, amid the cheers of the spectators.

Publishers' Note. "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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No. 18.

NEW YORK, June 10, 1905.

Price Five Cents.

JACK LIGHTFOOT'S DILEMMA;

OR,

A Traitor on the Diamond.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Jack Lightfoot, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

Tom Lightfoot, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

Ned Skeen, of impulsive, nervous temperament, one of those who followed the newcomer, Birkett, being dazzled by the dash of his manner, and the free way in which he flung money around.

Nat Kimball, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *jiu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

Lafe Lampton, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

Brodie Strawn, one of the baseball team, and a great admirer of Phil Kirtland.

Phil Kirtland, once Jack's bitter rival, but now a fair friend and holding down one end of Cranford's crack battery.

Sol. Russell, pitcher of the Highland team.

Boralmio, an East Indian juggler.

Reel Snodgrass, who claimed to be a nephew of the rich man of Cranford.

Mr. Snodgrass, a millionaire of Cranford, who had often proven himself a good friend of Jack's.

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE LAND OF MYSTERY.

Jack Lightfoot heard his name called, and, turning round, saw Mr. Snodgrass' messenger and house servant standing in the door, beckoning to him.

"Hello!" said Lafe Lampton, who was with Jack at the time. "I wonder what he wants?"

"I don't know. We'll see."

"Likely old Snod wants to make you his heir—he's taken such a fancy to you lately! Some fellows are born lucky; and others are——"

He stopped the flow of his words to munch a peanut.

"What?"

"Born lazy and hungry, like me."

He moved along at Jack's side, looking the personification of laziness as he shuffled heavily over the pave-

ment, his jaws working and his hands thrust into his pockets.

"I've got that tired feeling all the time now, since this warm weather came on."

He grinned, and felt round in his pockets for more peanuts.

"You were just as lazy in the winter," said Jack. "Why don't you brace up, straighten your shoulders, and step along with some vim?"

"What's the use? That would only make me more tired than I am."

"Well, I should hate to feel tired all the time!"

"Oh, I don't feel tired all the time."

"When don't you?"

"When I'm asleep"

The dapper little servant, a boy himself—who was so trim and neat that Lafe declared his belief that he kept himself stored away in a dress-suit case most of the time—came out to the gate, as Jack and Lafe approached.

"Mr. Snodgrass told me to watch for you, and to send you in if I saw you go by."

"That let's me out," said Lafe.

"Oh, come along in," Jack urged. "I shan't be here more than a minute or two, probably."

The boy did not object, and Lafe Lampton followed his friend into the yard and on into the house, the boy opening the door for them and piloting them into the broad hall.

Snodgrass appeared in the hall through the door that led to his library.

His face was pale, a thing so uncommon that it attracted Jack's attention at once; but, in contradiction to this, his manner was almost hilarious.

"Come right in!" he urged.

Lafe stood in hesitation, his hat in his hands.

"You, too," said Snodgrass; "come right in."

Then they passed on into the library, which had been darkened and was lighted only by a lamp, following Snodgrass, who walked with the springy step of a boy.

Both Jack and Lafe were considerably astonished by what they saw when they reached the library door.

Seated in the center of the rich Oriental rug, which covered the floor, was a veritable Hindoo, or, at least,

an East Indian, with a queer-looking teakwood box in front of him. He wore a turban and flowing trousers, and there was a scarf or sash about his waist that held a curved sword and a dangerous-looking dagger.

By the side of this queer figure stood a boy of sixteen or seventeen, clad in much the same fashion, except that he carried no weapon.

The singular thing about this boy was the fact that he was fair-haired, and light-complexioned.

The man was an Oriental; the boy a European, or an American.

As Jack and Lafe stopped, speechless, when they beheld these queer figures, Snodgrass stood regarding them with almost childish delight.

He clapped his hands softly together and laughed in a way that Jack had never heard. Snodgrass was given to quiet joking and some attempts at dry humor at times, but never to such hilarity as he now evinced. Jack could not have been more astonished if the old gentleman had proceeded to execute a toe dance.

"The thing surprises you, does it?" he asked, with that strange smile, again clapping his hands softly together. "I knew it would! I knew it would!"

Neither Jack nor Lafe knew what to say.

"Come right on into the library," said Snodgrass.

Then, to Jack's surprise, the boy spoke:

"Yes, come in; we won't bite you!"

Lafe still stood with his mouth open, forgetful of the peanut he had been munching.

But he followed Jack, as the latter entered the library.

"Now, we'll have a show!" cackled Snodgrass, motioning them to chairs. "What is the first thing on the program, Boralmó?"

Boralmó was evidently the Hindoo.

He was staring very hard at the visitors, with eyes that held a dull gleam of red back of their midnight blackness. Such eyes, scintillating, fiery, serpent-like, Jack had never seen in the head of any human being. The very look of them made him feel creepy.

The Hindoo seemed almost a gayly colored snake coiled there on the rich rug.

And the thing he did now made him seem more

snakelike than before; for, opening the box before him, he revealed a hooded cobra.

The snake lay coiled closely in the box, packed about with what seemed to be folds of cotton. It appeared to be dead, for it did not move or show any signs of life.

"Jiminy crickets!" Lafe whispered to himself.

It was the limit of Lafe's present ability to express his astonishment. Not knowing what he was doing, he fished up a peanut, broke it open mechanically, and as slowly poked the kernels into his staring mouth.

Jack settled back in his chair and looked at the Hindoo, at the snake, and at the boy, with a glance of surprise now and then given to Mr. Snodgrass himself.

Jack was as much astonished as Lafe, but he could conceal his emotions better, and was, besides, in spite of Lafe's heavy and lethargic manner, much steadier of nerve, and cooler.

Yet his heart quickened its beats as he watched this scene and saw the strange, red glow of the Hindoo's eyes.

Taking out a sort of flute, or pipe, the Hindoo put it to his lips and began to play softly.

The music was almost a monotone, with a certain swinging cadence.

Both Lafe and Jack declared afterward that it made them feel sleepy just to listen to it.

By degrees the movement quickened, and the notes rose a little higher. Yet they were still soft and flute-like.

Jack found himself rubbing his eyes as if to keep himself awake, and observed Lafe doing the same.

Then he made the startling discovery that the room was growing darker.

Jack had not seen the boy move from his position by the side of the man; but when he discovered that the room was growing darker, he saw that the boy had risen and was slowly turning down the lamp.

Then something that resembled in its general appearance a mirror, and which stood behind the Hindoo, an article of furniture that Jack did not remember to have ever noticed before in that library, began to glow in a singular and phosphorescent way, lighting

the room with sickly, greenish shine, very unlike healthy daylight.

The greenish glow fell full on the Hindoo as he played his flute, and on the box in which the cobra lay.

Then, the music further quickening, the cobra lifted its hideous hooded head.

It seemed to be rousing from a deep sleep.

Higher and higher the head was lifted, the hood expanding ominously.

Looking from the snake to the Hindoo, Jack fancied he saw in the wicked little eyes of the serpent the same red glow that seemed to shine from behind the orbs of the snake charmer.

The cobra now moved in the box with a sliding, rustling motion, and threw half of its length out upon the floor, and lay there, with its head on the floor and its tail still in the box.

Then its entire length trailed out of the box.

With a feeling of stupefaction and almost horror Jack saw it advance in his direction.

It had its head well erect, its hood expanded, and he feared it might strike him.

Then the boy dashed in, caught it up, and threw it into the air.

The green light failed utterly, then flashed forth with a blinding radiance; and the snake was gone.

Jack looked about, gasping.

"Jee-iminy crickets!" he heard Lafe exclaim, softly.

Yes, the snake was gone! Jack could not see it anywhere.

But the box was closed, and the Hindoo, opening it, showed the cobra lying asleep again in the cottony folds that lined it.

The boy now came forward with something that resembled a green cloak.

He threw it over the open box.

The cloak rose up in the center, and Jack was sure that the cobra had lifted itself and was trying to get out of the box through the cloak.

But when the Hindoo whisked the cloak away, both snake and box were gone, and a little tree seemed to be growing up from the center of the rug.

The boy threw the cloak over this sprout of a tree, and Jack saw the center of it rise still higher.

When the Hindoo whisked away the cloak the tree was seen to be much taller, and had blossoms on it.

"Jee-imony crickets!" Lafe muttered.

Again the cloak was thrown over, and again taken off; and there stood forth in the center of the room a small tree with fruit, and the fruit was *apples*.

The boy took one from the tree and tossed it to Lafe Lampton.

"Try it!" he said, with something like a chuckle.

Lafe was dazed, but he caught the apple mechanically, as if it were a baseball.

The glowing, mirror-like piece of furniture behind the Hindoo winked into darkness again.

A moment later the lamp was turned on full, by the boy.

Tree, snake, box and Hindoo were gone.

But the boy stood there, smiling before Lafe; and in his hand Lafe held a red-cheeked apple.

"Test it!" said the boy.

Lafe was about to set his teeth in it.

Then he checked himself.

"No," he said, "I'm going to keep this thing, to see if this is all a dream. If I've got a real apple in my fist when I wake up I'll know I've seen things. If I haven't, I'll know I was asleep."

CHAPTER II.

JACK'S VISITORS.

When the servant let Jack and Lafe out of the house and they stood again in the bright sunshine of the outer world they had the queer feeling that what they had beheld had not been real, but only a dream or a figment of the imagination.

"I've heard of those East Indian magicians," said Jack, "but I never thought I'd get to see one."

"Nor I," said Lafe.

He looked at the apple and took a bite out of it.

"This is an apple, all right. Try it."

Jack tried it through curiosity.

"It wasn't any dream," he declared.

"I wonder when that Hindoo came? I don't think anybody knows he's here."

"I wonder who that boy is?" Jack added.

Jack was to have an answer to this question that same evening.

He was seated in the shed room at home, talking with Tom Lightfoot, telling him of the Hindoo snake charmer, when there was a tap on the door.

When Jack opened it he saw Snodgrass and the boy.

The boy had discarded his East Indian garb and was clothed in ordinary costume, so that at first Jack did not recognize him as the youngster he had seen at Snodgrass' house.

Snodgrass came in, in response to Jack's invitation, and the boy entered with him.

There was something strange in the old gentleman's manner. Jack could not tell what it was, but he had never seen Mr. Snodgrass look so before.

The boy put his hands into his pockets in a self-confident way and stared round at the things on the walls of the room—at the crossed fencing foils, snowshoes, and other objects, and at the pictures and books.

"Gee!" he cried. "I like this!"

He was giving the boys not the slightest attention, until Snodgrass spoke.

"Reel," he said, "these are the young fellows I was telling you about."

The boy turned round then, and advanced across the room.

"Say," he said, extending his hand in almost a patronizing way to Jack, "I think I shall like this. What are those things up there?"

"Those are snowshoes," said Jack, as he took the extended hand.

"Oh, yes; you do have snow up here! I'd forgot about that. And can I learn to walk on those things?"

"This is Jack Lightfoot, and that is Tom Lightfoot," said Snodgrass, by way of introduction.

"So this is Jack, is it? We've rubbed noses before. Glad to meet you. Glad to meet you."

He shook hands, also, with Tom.

"This young gentleman is my nephew, Reelward Snodgrass," explained the old man, with something like an air of mingled pride and helpless resignation.

"Which one of you is going to teach me?" asked Reelward Snodgrass, looking from one to the other.

When the Hindoo whisked away the cloak the tree was seen to be much taller, and had blossoms on it.

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"Which one of you is going to teach me?" asked Reelward Snodgrass, looking from one to the other.

"We'll come to that in a minute, Reelward, if you'll be quiet," said the old gentleman.

"But I'd like to know about those snowshoes! You don't expect to have snow soon, do you?"

"Not before next winter," said Jack.

"So long as that? I think I'd like to try them right away. You couldn't walk on them, if there wasn't any snow?"

"Why, yes; but there wouldn't be any fun in it."

"Then I'll try them to-morrow. And what was that you said, uncle, about skating?"

"That will come next winter, too," said Snodgrass, sinking into the chair which Jack offered him. "The boys think of nothing now but baseball."

"Oh, I can play that, all right. We used to have a nine in Bombay. Don't you know I was telling you about that, uncle, and about the home-run hit I made that time? Gee! here's a bat!"

He picked it up from the corner of the room and swung it round as if he were swatting at a ball.

"Oh, say, that will be great! When are we going to have a game?"

"There's to be a game next Saturday," Jack answered.

"Then I'll be in it! Whoo-ee! That's all right!"

He swung again with the bat.

"Reelward, do be careful!" urged Snodgrass. "You came near hitting the lamp then."

But, though he seemed nervous and strangely soft-spoken, he smiled indulgently.

"I have brought Reelward down here to introduce him to you. He is to live with me hereafter."

"That's me," said Reelward, as he dropped into a chair and looked at Jack and Tom, nursing the bat across his knees. "I'm from Bombay, India. I was brought up in Bombay and in other parts of India, and never saw this country until a few weeks ago. The way I happened to——"

Snodgrass made a deprecating motion.

"Reelward, I'm to tell this story!"

"All right," said Reelward, taking up the bat and swinging with it again. "Be sure you get it straight."

"I'll get it straight," said Snodgrass, with a flush.

"But for pity sake, don't knock me over with that bat!

If you must wave it, go out into the center of the room with it."

"Is this the bat you play with?" Reelward asked.

"No," said Jack. "We use it sometimes in practice games."

"This young gentleman is the son of my unfortunate brother," said Snodgrass, seeing that if he told his story he would have to go on in spite of the boy's interruptions. "My brother was lost sight of for a good many years, and we didn't know what had become of him. But it seems that he died in Bombay, leaving this son, who at the time was but an infant. The boy's mother died there also, of fever. You remember the Hindoo who gave that most wonderful performance at my house this afternoon?"

It was not likely that Jack could ever forget that Hindoo.

"The boy was taken charge of by him, and has been with him most of the time since. My brother, when he died, left some money, and it has been used to educate Reelward and pay his expenses."

"Oh, but say, it doesn't cost anything to live in that country, as it does here!" the boy cut in.

"Reelward, let me tell this story!"

"Well, you know it doesn't, uncle! Why, down at that hotel in New York we had to pay five dollars a day apiece. Wasn't that something fierce?"

He swung again with the bat.

"When the money was gone Boralmo came to this country in search of me," Snodgrass continued. "He had my address, which my brother had left. It seems strange that in all these years he did not write to me, but Boralmo is a strange man, and it perhaps did not occur to him. Well, he came here, and then found me, bringing Reelward with him. They arrived this afternoon."

"And it was a hot, old ride, too, in that stuffy train!" said the boy. "Why don't you Americans have cars like the English, instead of cars where everybody sits together in one big room? I like the compartment cars the best myself. Why, to-day I actually had to sit by a man who made me think of a hog. Ugh!"

"As I said," Snodgrass went on, "Reelward is to live with me now. I've been telling him about the boys

here, and especially about you, Jack. And now I've brought him down here, and I'm going to put him under you, for you to train in athletics. He already understands baseball. But most of the things the boys know and do here he seems never to have even heard of."

"And when will you begin?" said the boy, looking at Jack. "Can't we have a ball game to-morrow?"

Jack smiled at the enthusiasm of this strange young fellow.

"Perhaps we can have a practice game," he answered.

"That will be all right. Anything. Just so I can get to swat the ball. And, say, I want to play in that game Saturday. Where is that game to be?"

"Here. Cranford plays Highland Saturday."

"What's Highland?"

"It's the name of a town, and of the nine from that town."

"Well, can't I be in that game?"

"I'm afraid not," said Jack. "We have our nine already made up. And, besides, no one can play on the nine who is not a student either of the high school or of the academy."

"Well, I can belong to one of those schools, can't I?"

"The term closes now right away. The summer vacation is at hand."

"But the school hasn't closed yet?"

"No."

"Then I'll belong to it, just to get on that nine. What else do I have to do?"

"Well, you have to be a pretty good player."

"I'm that, all right. Wow! I'll get on that nine. Say, I'll go to that school right off, and join the nine, and play in that game on Saturday."

"Well, the cheek you show is the limit!" was the thought of Tom Lightfoot.

As if he knew Tom's thought Reelward turned to him.

"Are you on that nine?"

"Yes," said Tom.

"But he's the captain?"

Tom nodded.

"I suppose you belong to the same school?"

"No, I attend the academy; he goes to the high school."

"And you're his cousin! Well, that's funny! Which is the best school?"

"I don't dare to answer that," said Tom, with a smile. "If I say the academy Jack will challenge me, for he thinks the high school is."

"Which is the most stylish—the most fashionable? Oh, what is the word—swell? Yes, that's it. Which is the most swell?"

"The academy," said Jack.

"Then I think I'll join the academy. The swell crowd always gets the most plums of all kinds in this world."

Snodgrass smiled indulgently.

"Reelward, as you'll find, has some strange notions. I don't think, though, that he'll attend that academy, while Prof. Sanderson is at the head of it. He's a man I haven't any use for."

"What's the matter with him?" the boy demanded.

"I don't like him."

"Just the same, I'm going to the swellest school. No cheap schools for me. When I was in Bombay I attended the finest school there."

"Jack hasn't said that he will undertake to train you in athletics," reminded Snodgrass.

The boy gave Jack a sharp look.

"Oh, but he will!" he cried. "And he'll put me on that nine, when he sees that I know how to play. Won't you?"

He came over to Jack, laid his hand on Jack's shoulder, and looked him in the eyes.

Jack laughed.

"I'm willing to show you what I can, of course."

"Oh, you won't need to show me anything about baseball. I'm up in that already."

"I'll do what I can for him," said Jack, directing his words to Snodgrass.

"That's good," said Snodgrass. "We can't ask more than that. And, mind you, Reelward, when Jack says that it means something."

Reelward dropped back into his seat, still holding the bat.

"Get me into that game, Saturday," he said, coaxingly.

The boy's manner amused Jack.

"I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll explain those tricks that Hindoo did this afternoon I'll teach you everything I know in the way of athletics."

The boy shook his head.

"I couldn't."

"Why not?"

"It belongs to the mysteries. If I did that Boralmo would kill me. And, besides, it would be violating the oath."

"What oath?"

"Well, when you learn those things you have to join a certain secret society. I s'pose that's what you'd call it. The jugglers of India never teach their secrets except to members of their own families or caste, or to certain other ones. I don't know much now, myself—that is, not much compared with what Boralmo does. I help him, that's all. When I was left with Boralmo by my father, before he died—that is before my father died—Boralmo had been his best friend. Then I became the same as Boralmo's son. And he, being a juggler and considering me the same as his son, taught me what I know. But I couldn't tell it."

It was the first time that Reelward Snodgrass had spoken in a serious tone, with words that seemed to come from his heart.

"It was all a trick, though?" said Jack.

"Wasn't that a real apple?"

"Yes, but it didn't grow on that tree."

"You saw it on the tree?"

"But that was just trickery. It had been put there, and the tree was thrust up through some hole in the floor."

"Think so?" said the boy. "Ask uncle if there's a hole in that floor."

"There isn't," Snodgrass declared.

"But you'll teach these other things to me, anyway?" the boy urged.

"I'm willing to do the best I can to please Mr. Snodgrass."

"That's good," said Snodgrass. "Now, I'll be going. I shall leave Reelward here a little while, and he

can come home later, for I want you boys to get acquainted."

CHAPTER III.

REEL SNODGRASS

"He's an easy guy," said Reelward, as soon as Snodgrass had taken his departure.

He pulled his chair up to the workbench, and, throwing his feet up on the bench, leaned back in the chair in a comfortable attitude.

"What makes you say that?" Tom demanded.

"He'll do anything a fellow wants."

He looked companionably at Jack and Tom.

"Call me Reel," he said. "Uncle Snod says the name in full all the time, and it's tiresome. I'd rather be called Reel. We are going to get acquainted now, and you're to teach me athletics and put me on that baseball nine. Uncle Snod said you would, before he came down here. He says you like him and you'd do that just to please him. I'd rather you'd do it just to please me, but any way to get on."

"Did you ever hear of your uncle before you set out from Bombay on this trip to find him?" Jack inquired, for the whole thing seemed rather curious.

"I knew there was such a man, or had been; I didn't know whether he was living or not. But one day Boralmo said to me, 'The money is all gone, and now we've got to go!'

"Go where?" I asked him.

"Then he took out a paper and showed it to me. It was the first I knew about it. And there it was all written down, the name and address of my uncle here in America, just where he lived and how to go there, and all about it. My father had told Boralmo. It instructed Boralmo to take me there as soon as he could."

"He didn't obey that part of it," said Tom.

"No. Yet he says he did. He says he couldn't go before. He waited till the cash was all gone; and then he was willing to go, thinking more money could be had here."

"Is he a regular Hindoo juggler?"

"Yes, one of the best there is."

"I should like to know how he made that tree grow

up out of the floor," said Jack, recalling that wonderful performance.

"I've seen him do even stranger things," said Reel, as he tipped further back in his chair and put the bat behind his head, holding an end of it in each hand. "I saw him once make a snake come up out of the ground where there was neither snake nor hole."

Jack was quite willing to believe it, after what he had seen.

"And don't you know how these things are done?"

"Honestly I don't, only some of the things. Most of the things he does, though, are pure trickery. That business this afternoon was trickery."

"I could guess that."

"Yes. Well, you noticed that several times the light went out, and at other times it grew so dim you could hardly see. Those were the times when he made his quick passes and changes. But he can really fool you right in broad daylight, with his sleight-of-hand, I mean. He says when I'm older he'll teach me all that he knows himself. I told him one day I wanted him to teach me right then, for he might die and I'd never learn; but he only laughed and said that all his people lived to be at least a hundred years old and he intended to live that long himself."

"Does he talk English?" said Tom.

"Only a few words."

"You learned it in Bombay?"

"Yes. I forgot to explain about that. We were a good part of the time living right in the European part of the city, and the school I went to was there. I got acquainted with a good many Americans, too, for there are Americans and American children in Bombay. It's a big city, you know, with English shops and banks and other things."

He got up and walked round the shed room, admiring the different things he saw, and asking innumerable questions.

Coming back to the chair, he catechized Tom concerning the academy and Prof. Sanderson.

"I think that's the school I'll go to," he declared, "even though uncle says I shan't."

Tom went away after a while, when the hour grew late.

Reel Snodgrass still sat in the chair.

Jack found him a very interesting youngster, different in every respect from any boy he had yet seen; and he plied him with questions.

"See this!" said Reel, finally.

He held up a bright metal disk, shaped like a coin, which was fixed to a sort of handle, and could be whirled very rapidly on the end of the handle.

He set it to whirling.

"Sometimes the fakirs, or jugglers, use this in their work with the snakes. The snake looks at it, for it shines, you see, very brightly while it whirls; and the snake, watching it, forgets about the man."

"One time I was out in the suburbs of the city of Bombay, and I came to a native hut, and in the thatch of the hut I saw a cobra. I held this up and set it to spinning this way, and the snake let me step right up and put my hands on it."

Looking at the bright object whirling in the hands of the boy, and hearing the low monotone into which his talk had dropped, Jack Lightfoot found himself growing sleepy.

He thought at first this was because the hour was late.

He was interested in the story, and was picturing to himself the cobra as it lay in that thatch of the native house, when the words seemed to become lower and lower, and instead of looking at the whirling disk he thought he was looking into the bright eyes of the snake itself.

Yet he felt no fear. He had, instead, a sense of exhilaration; because, as it seemed to him, he could step up and lay his hands on the snake, as Reel had said he did, and it did not offer to harm him.

The eyes of the snake emitted flashes of light.

Then Jack felt that he was drifting away—away—away.

After that he did not know what occurred, until he felt some one shaking him by the shoulder.

He yawned, stretched, and opened his eyes.

His mother stood before him, with a lighted lamp in her hand.

"Jack, it's after midnight!"

"Why—where——"

He stared about.

"That boy?" she asked.

"Yes! There was a boy here, then?"

"Yes, that strange boy who came down here with Snodgrass. But he left more than an hour ago. I suppose you fell asleep after he went."

Jack felt dazed.

"Yes, I fell asleep," he admitted.

Then he followed his mother from the shed room into the house.

He was still dazed when he reached his room, and instead of retiring at once, as his mother insisted, he sat down by the window, which was open. Sitting there, bathing his head in the cool air, he proceeded to think over the occurrences of the evening, and particularly of what had befallen him.

The whole thing seemed like a dream.

Yet from his mother's words he knew that Snodgrass had come to the house and that this boy had accompanied him.

"He must have hypnotized me, or put me to sleep," was Jack's conclusion.

He felt a smothered wrath against the young fellow from Bombay, and also contempt for himself.

"They say that only a fellow with a weak head can be used in that manner," was his thought. "I was easy. He simply set that disk to whirling, and began to tell that story in his soft, smooth way, and before I knew it I was asleep."

He was wide awake now, at any rate, as he sat thus thinking, staring out into the night.

"If I tell the fellows about that they'll laugh at me. But I'll tell Tom and Lafe, anyway. Both have seen Reel Snodgrass, and Lafe has seen the Hindoo. That must be one of their tricks. Well, Mr. Snodgrass has certainly picked up a queer specimen in this nephew, and the Hindoo is queerer still."

Remembering the commands of his mother, Jack retired now, though he was not sleepy.

But the sleepy feeling overcame him again as soon as his head touched the pillow.

When he awoke he heard his name shouted.

The time was broad daylight; and, looking through the window, he saw Reel Snodgrass in the yard.

"I wonder if we couldn't have a little athletic practice this morning?" he shouted up to Jack. "I've come down early."

CHAPTER IV.

MORE ABOUT REEL SNODGRASS.

"That was queer about you!" said Reel, when Jack had dressed and come down into the yard. "I mean the way you fell asleep last night while I was talking to you."

Jack looked at him keenly.

"Do you really think it was?"

"Don't you think it was?"

"No."

"You don't? Why wasn't it?"

"I hope you don't suppose it was anything I could be pleased with."

Jack scanned the face before him critically. It was the first time he had had a chance to see that face by the broad, clear light of day. It was a pleasant face, but with some weak and some cruel lines in it, perhaps due to the youth's early training. In addition it had the tanned or burnt look that comes from living under a hot sun in a hot climate.

Reel Snodgrass flushed under Jack's steady gaze.

"You mean you think I did that?"

"I know you did."

Reel stepped back and looked confused.

"When you set that disk to whirling and began to talk in that low, slow way, you did it with the intention of causing me to fall asleep."

"You're off, as you Americans say. I didn't do that to put you to sleep. I was telling you how I handled the snake, and the first thing I knew you were asleep. I didn't want to disturb you, so I slipped out and went home. You didn't stay there all night, in that chair?"

"No."

Jack again looked at him with that straight gaze.

"You didn't do that purposely?"

Reel flushed with sudden anger.

"I've explained about it."

"Answer me this, then. Don't these Hindoo magicians and hypnotizers use something like that at times,

when they want to get some one under their influence?"

"See here!" said Reel; "I can't quarrel with you, you know, for you're to show me the American games, and you're to get me on that nine."

"I don't think I shall try to get you on the nine."

Reel stared.

"But uncle said you would!"

"When did he say it?"

"This morning, just before I left the house. He said he knew you would do the best you could for me, on his account; and from the praise he gave you I judged that if you wanted to, you could put me on the nine right away."

"I am willing, and even anxious to please your uncle," Jack acknowledged. "And I'll show you what I can of anything you want to learn in athletics. I've got dumb-bells, Indian clubs, foils and other things in the shed room—the room where we were last evening. But as for the nine, though I'm captain, I couldn't think of taking so important a step as putting you on it without consulting the members. It wouldn't be right. And you aren't a student of any school."

"I'm going into the academy to-day."

"So Mr. Snodgrass gave in on that point, did he?"

"Certainly. I knew he would."

"Did you hypnotize him to get him to say so," Jack asked, with a meaning smile that caused Reel Snodgrass to flush again.

"Not on your life. I didn't have to. Did I say that right—'Not on your life'?"

"That's some of the boys' slang."

"I'm dropping to the slang right fast!" he laughed. "Or should I have said 'I'm dropping to it right smart'? It's almost like learning a foreign language, this American slang."

"Better not use any of it," said Jack. "It don't help you."

"But you use it."

"Yes, when I'm not thinking. I use it too much, perhaps. But come into the house. And you must take breakfast with me. After that I'll show you a few things in the shed room. But if you think of playing ball, I'd advise you not to do much with the dumb-

bells, or clubs, or the punching bag; for if you're not used to them they may make you stiff and sore for a little while, and that wouldn't be a good preparation for a ball game."

"Then you are going to put me on that nine? I knew you would."

The confidence of this stranger was amazing.

Jack did not like his manner of showing this confidence, any more than he liked the trick he believed Reel had played on him the previous evening.

Yet his desire to please Mr. Snodgrass was strong. Snodgrass had stood by him more than once as a firm friend at a time when he needed friends. And as Snodgrass wanted him to put Reel through the athletic paces Jack would do the best he could by him.

In the shed room, after breakfast, Jack showed Reel Snodgrass some of the many things he knew.

Then they went out into the back yard, and worked a while at throwing and catching a baseball.

While they were thus engaged Lafe Lampton came up, and was considerably surprised to find the young friend of the Hindoo there, for Lafe did not yet know of the evening visit of Snodgrass and his nephew to the shed room.

"Hello, here's the other boy!" cried Reel, when he saw Lafe. "Come in and join us. We're having a little pitch and toss."

"Do you belong to the academy, or the high school?" he asked, as Lafe came into the yard.

"The high school," said Lafe. "I wouldn't be found dead in that old academy."

Reel stared. What he had so far heard had made him think the academy was the more desirable school.

"Why?" he queried.

"Principally, because it's too swell."

"Oh! Too swell? That suits me. The sweller the better."

He looked Lafe over curiously, noting the carelessness of his dress.

"Perhaps everything has to be too spick-and-span clean up there for you?"

Lafe's sky-blue eyes looked him over coolly in return.

"Well, yes, that's one reason. But there are others. You'll learn what they are if you ever go there."

"I'm going there to-day, and I'm to join the baseball nine, and Saturday I'm playing with you fellows against Highland."

"Oh, mamma!" gurgled Lafe, falling back against the fence in a pretended state of limp helplessness. "Who told you all that?"

"He wants to do those things," Jack explained; "and Mr. Snodgrass wants him to."

"Got any more of those apples?" said Lafe, changing the subject abruptly.

"Wasn't that a good one?" Reel demanded.

"It was! Great."

"Well, then, here is another off the same tree. Uncle Snodgrass said you were crazy for apples, and I brought it down for you."

Lafe caught it as it was thrown to him, looked it over carefully as if to assure himself that it was genuine, then set his teeth into it.

"It's all right," he said. "How much do you want for that magic tree? I think I'd like to buy it."

CHAPTER V.

HOW REEL SNODGRASS GOT ON THE NINE.

Reelward Snodgrass was accepted as a student very promptly by Prof. Sanderson. As the nephew of Mr. Snodgrass, Reelward would be a rich young fellow, and that was the sort Sanderson liked to get into his academy.

Jack was not surprised when, almost before the day was done, Reel Snodgrass had become one of the most popular of the boys at the academy.

The strangeness of his appearance in Cranford, the fact that he had come there with a Hindoo snake charmer, who was even then at Snodgrass' house, and the further fact that Reel knew a lot of interesting and confusing juggling tricks, drew the boys, and the girls, too, round him in swarms.

And Reel enjoyed every minute of this popular attention.

He had a very good opinion of himself and was a bit vain. And he liked to surprise the students with his jugglery.

"Hi! there," he would shout. "There's a silver quarter in your ear!"

Then he would reach up and seem to pick that quarter right out of the ear of the person he had addressed.

Once when he thus appeared to pull a quarter out of a boy's ear the boy claimed it as his property, and there came near being a fight between him and Reel as to its ownership.

Altogether, the first day at the academy was a great day for Reel, and when he came down to Jack Lightfoot's, after school hours, he was filled with contentment and enthusiasm.

The boys of the athletic club and the nine were anxious to meet Reel Snodgrass, for his singular story had flashed all over town that day.

Jack introduced him to such of the boys as he had not already met, and an impromptu game of baseball was introduced at once for his gratification.

Jack found that Reel did not need much coaching. He was not as good a ball player as the best members of the nine, but he was really better than some of the substitutes.

Reel could not get enough of baseball, and the boys continued on the diamond until sunset.

Then they scattered hurriedly for home, for that night the Hindoo was to give an exhibition of his wonderful skill as a sleight-of-hand performer in the public hall, and all the boys wanted to go.

There was a crush at the hall that night. It seemed that nearly the whole town turned out.

The exhibition was a success in every way, for the Hindoo was able to do tricks on the stage, assisted by Reel Snodgrass, which were so mysterious and apparently so impossible that they were the talk of the town for days afterward.

When Reel appeared at the academy the next morning after some further exercise at the hands of Jack Lightfoot, he found that his popularity had grown to an amazing degree. The boys, and the girls, too, fairly swarmed about him.

Reel had some new things on tap, and to further gain their good will he showed them how he did some of the more simple of his tricks.

Then they plied him with questions concerning the

marvelous tricks performed by the Hindoo the night before in the public hall.

"I can't do those myself," Reel confessed, but in a way to make them believe that he could if only he would and that he had a vast fund of mysterious lore which he chose to keep from them.

This was another day of triumph for Reel Snodgrass.

Even Phil Kirtland, who never liked to play second fiddle to anyone, seemed quite won over by the cleverness of the boy from Bombay.

That evening Reel Snodgrass was made a member in good and regular standing of the academy athletic club, and his name was the next day presented to Jack Lightfoot by Phil Kirtland as a candidate for the position of substitute on the Cranford baseball nine.

There were some things about Reel Snodgrass that Jack had not been able to like, notably the trick, if it was a trick, by which Reel had put him to sleep.

Yet there were other things in Reel which he rather fancied, and he was above all anxious to please Mr. Snodgrass, who for a long time now had been his especial friend and admirer.

So, as the thing seemed to meet the wishes of the boys, Jack gave Reel Snodgrass a position as substitute.

That appeared to put Reel in the seventh heaven of delight.

Yet his ambition was not satisfied. He wanted to play on the nine in the game against Highland on Saturday.

"Do you think it would be right?" said Jack, speaking to him about it in the shed room one evening.

"Why not?"

"The nine is already selected. What excuse could I have for retiring one of the men and putting you in his place? Those boys are as anxious to go into that game Saturday as you are, and they have already been assigned to their positions."

"But I'm a better player than most of them!" Reel insisted. "You want to have the best material you can get on your nine, don't you?"

Jack smiled. Reel's self-assurance was monumental.

"If there's a chance I'll put you on."

This was not enough.

"Uncle wants me to be in that game Saturday. He's very anxious about it."

"I can't promise anything more than that I'll put you on if there's a chance."

That afternoon Mr. Snodgrass met Jack on the street.

He was smiling and seemed more like himself. Jack noted the difference in his manner. Yet he was not yet the familiar Mr. Snodgrass Jack had known.

"Reel has been telling me about your offer to put him on the nine for the Saturday's game if you see an opportunity," he remarked.

"Yes, I promised him I would if there was an opening," Jack answered.

"Can't you make an opening for him? Can't you do that just to favor me, Jack?"

"I would do anything in the world to please you, Mr. Snodgrass," said Jack, quite truthfully. "And if I could put him on the nine for the Saturday game without doing wrong to any member of the nine, as it is now made up, I should be glad to do so. But unless one of the nine steps out of his own free will I don't see how I can do anything."

The next morning Jubal Marlin came up to Jack, smiling. It was the day before the game.

"By hemlock, naow, if yeou had a chance tew make twenty-five dollars without doin' a tarnal thing, wouldn't yeou do it?"

"I think I would," said Jack, not understanding the drift. "Twenty-five dollars isn't picked up every day in the week."

Jack expected that when he heard Jubal through it would be the unfolding of one of Jubal's ingenious schemes for money-making.

Jubal incubated such schemes with great frequency, but they rarely hatched out just as he intended. Jubal's ambition was to become a rich man, and he had often declared that any old way to make money was the way for him.

"What are you up to now, Jubal?" Jack asked.

"Well, it's this way," said Jubal. "I ain't feelin' quite peart, and I'm offered twenty-five dollars to stay

out of the nine to-morrow when the nine plays Highland."

Jack's face changed.

"Who made the offer?" he inquired, thinking of treachery on the part of Highland.

"Snodgrass," said Jubal. "He seen me this mornin'. But yeou have tew help me aout, if I git the twenty-five. The propersition is that if I stay aout and this here new feller, Reel Snodgrass, is put on the nine in my place, I'm tew have twenty-five dollars right daown in my little fist. By granny, it will be an easy way tew make money!"

"And you'd be willing to stay out?" said Jack.

"Fer twenty-five dollars? By hemlock, I'd stop playin' fer a month fer that much. I don't git any money fer playin'; and if I can git somethin' fer not playin', why, that hits me."

This was a very sensible way to look at it, from a purely business standpoint.

Jack, however, was not built that way himself. He would not have remained out of that game when he could be in it for a hundred dollars. He might afterward have the feeling, if the game was lost, that he might have done something to cause the team to win; and then he would never have been able to forgive himself. But Jubal looked at matters from another viewpoint entirely.

"Do you really mean that you will stay out, Jubal, and let Reel play in your position?"

"Sure thing."

"And you think it will be right?"

"It's allus right tew make all the money yeou kin."

"Right to the other members of the nine, I mean? They depend on your batting ability, you know. You're our only regular left-handed batter. And sometimes a left-handed man can puzzle the twirler, when the rest of the batters can't. You've thought of that?"

"I've thought of that twenty-five more'n anything else," Jubal admitted, with a grin. "Why, see here!" He took out a pencil and an old envelope. "Looky here! Twenty-five dollars at compaound interest fer ten years, compaounded twice a year, ekals——"

He dropped down on the grass by the fence—they

were out in front of the house at Lightfoot's—and Jack dropped down beside him.

After a little figuring Jubal announced the, to him, prodigious amount that the money would thus bring if placed at interest.

"Do yeou reckon I kin afford tew throw that away?"

"There's another thing, Jubal," said Jack, "and perhaps you haven't thought of it. Reel Snodgrass has been here not yet a week. If we let him into the nine and play with him against Highland, what's to keep the Highlanders from making a high old kick and charging fraud? They can say that he has no right in the nine, and that he's a professional. And though we're sure he is not a professional, it opens up trouble for us; and, besides, it makes our own case weak when we protest against the admission into their nine of some man we feel sure has no right there. There's been a good deal of trouble with these other nines on that score already, and we've made protests, believing that they've rung in professionals on us. You see how it may look."

"I see twenty-five dollars fer me," said Jubal, doggedly. "I don't want tew see anything else. Will yeou put him on if I step aout and let me collar that twenty-five?"

"I'll talk to the other fellows about it."

"And so will I. I'll fix it."

"I'm afraid you're not a very loyal member of the nine."

"Business first and sport afterward," said Jubal, with Yankee shrewdness.

Both Jack and Jubal talked with the other members of the nine.

That noon a meeting of the nine was held on the diamond, preliminary to practice.

Phil Kirtland championed the cause of the new-comer, and Brodie Strawn, as always, seconded Phil's desires.

Such was the sudden popularity of Reel Snodgrass that it seemed he could have anything he wished.

Some of the boys no doubt hoped that by thus favoring him he would in return favor them by opening up to them the mysteries of the many clever tricks of which he was master. Phil Kirtland may have had

such a feeling. Jack could not be sure. The only thing that made Jack at all willing that Reel should go on the nine was his anxiety to please Snodgrass.

At that meeting it was decided that Reel should take Jubal's position.

And in the practice game that followed Reel was inducted into all the secret signal work that was to be used in the game against Highland.

There could be no doubt that Reel Snodgrass was quick to learn. Before the practice work was over that noon he had all the signals stowed away in his retentive memory.

He was enthusiastic, too, for his work in the field and at the bat was very creditable.

Jack even began to think that by exchanging him for Jubal the nine had been strengthened, though he regretted that Jubal was not to be in the game.

"By hemlock, if anybody's satisfied, I am!" said Jubal, speaking to Jack afterward, at the same time patting a bulging lump in his pocket. "There's that little twenty-five stowed away right there. I'm goin' tew put it aout at interest right off. Soon's it was a sure thing that Reel was to be on the nine I struck old Snod fer the cash, and he handed it aout like a little man."

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEMPTATION AND THE THREAT.

As Reel Snodgrass walked out that night he felt much elated. The hero worship in which he delighted had been given to him in abundance. All the boys, and many of the girls, of Cranford, had hung about him whenever it was possible and seemed to delight in his company. He knew that there was a glamour of romance clinging to him because of his manner of entrance into the place and his association with the Hindoo.

The Hindoo kept himself out of sight, secluded in the Snodgrass home, where Mrs. Snodgrass did not like him and avoided him. But Boralmo only smiled mysteriously to himself, and squatted on the rug that he preferred to a chair, while he smoked strange aromatic tobacco in a queer pipe. To see him sitting thus made one think of Indian priests and incense. Mrs.

Snodgrass declared, however, that it made her think of snakes.

She declared another thing, with much vehemence to her friends, and this was that Snodgrass had not been the same man since the coming of the Hindoo. He had been abstracted, had answered her often as if he did not understand what she said, and seemed to be moving about all the time with his head in the clouds. But he admired the Hindoo, adored the boy, and, as he was master of his own home, they remained in spite of Mrs. Snodgrass' evident disrelish of their company.

As Reel walked forth thus, thinking of the sensation he was creating in the town, and pluming himself on it, he saw two figures approaching him.

"Oh, they can't keep away from me!" was his thought. "Whenever I step out somebody's laying for me, asking me to show them one of the tricks, or just anxious to look at me. I'm a wonder here."

But when these two figures approached he discovered that he had never met them before.

"Reel Snodgrass?" said one of them.

"That's what they call me," Reel answered, wondering if these two young men belonged in Cranford.

"So we thought. If you'll just walk out along this road with us we'd like a few words with you."

"Do you belong here?" Reel asked.

"We'll tell you all about that when we've had our little talk. It will be to your interest to go with us and hear what we've got to say."

There was a spirit of dare-devil adventure in Reel Snodgrass.

"All right," he said. "I don't think I've met you before, but I'm a stranger here."

Then they spoke of the weather, wondering if it would be fair the next day.

Having gone beyond earshot of the nearest houses, one of the men said:

"We understand you're to play on the Cranford nine against Highland to-morrow?"

"Yes," Reel promptly answered, for that was a thing he was rather proud of.

"Would you like to make a little money while you're doing it?" was the next question.

Reel stopped and looked hard at the men.

"I don't understand you!"

"You will, if you'll say whether you think you'd like to make some good money or not."

"Why, I've already paid twenty-five dollars for the privilege of being on the nine to-morrow."

The men laughed.

"So? That will be nuts for Highland, if they hear about it!"

"They won't like it, you mean?"

"Hardly."

"Why not?"

"It makes you a professional, doesn't it?"

"I don't think I understand you," said Reel.

"Well, you're an innocent guy for a ball player. A professional is one who plays for money. An amateur is one who plays merely for the love of it. Quite a difference, you see."

"But I'm not playing for money—I've paid money for the privilege of playing!"

Reel explained further.

They laughed again, and one of them, who was smoking a cigar, flicked the ashes of the cigar away with a finger on which a big ring blazed.

"Now, see here! Your name is Snodgrass, I believe?"

"Yes. Reel Snodgrass."

"And you're a stranger here?"

"My uncle lives here."

"But you've just arrived?"

"Yes."

"Now, how would you like to get that twenty-five back and a lot more? Did you fork over that yourself?"

"My uncle paid it."

"Well, say that twenty-five and some more—a good deal more—on top of it. You'd like to have a wad of money?"

"I never saw the fellow that wouldn't."

The man laughed easily and softly.

"Nor I. And, Snodgrass, that's just what we're after—money. We're after a lot of it, and we want it. To make the thing clear, we're sporting men—betting men, perhaps you'd say. We've got a big bet, several of them, in fact, up on this game to-morrow.

To speak flat, we're in the hole a thousand dollars if Cranford wins, and we're billed to win an equal amount if Cranford loses. We thought we had a dead sure thing when we made those bets, for we had some tips showing that Highland was far and away the best nine. But we find we were fooled. The chances seem good right now that Cranford will win, if something isn't done to prevent it. Now do you see what we're driving at?"

"I can see that you don't want Cranford to win, but I know that I do."

The man who had done most of the talking laughed again.

"How much would it be worth to you to throw that game?"

"A thousand dollars," said Reel, cool as a cucumber.

"Phew! You come high!"

"Of course I know you wouldn't pay it. So that's why I said it."

"But, seriously, how much do you want?"

"I'm not for sale."

"Oh, every man is for sale, if the right price is named. Some think they're not. But that is because enough money was never offered to them."

"What are your names?" Reel demanded.

"If we told you that, Snodgrass, you'd know as much as we do. And be sure that we know a good deal more than you suspect."

"Oh, you can't bluff me!" said Reel. "I've traveled. I've been about. Just remember that I wasn't brought up in any little two-by-twice village like this."

"No, you're from Bombay!"

"It was the second man who spoke, and he shot this at Reel in a savage tone.

"Suppose I am, what of it?" Reel demanded.

"I just wanted to emphasize that you're from Bombay—*nit!*"

"What do you mean by that?" Reel asked, but his tone had changed and the man observed it.

"I doubt if you ever saw Bombay. And as to that Hindoo, we know more about him than is good for him. So, you might as well talk sense to us, and not be so flip!"

Reel stared at the man in the half light with something like fear in his manner.

"I don't think I want to talk with you at all," he declared, and turned as if to walk back into the town.

But the voice of the other man detained him.

"Now, see here! As my friend says, we know altogether too much for the good of your Hindoo friend, and for you."

"Perhaps you think I'm not what I claim to be?" said Reel. "But I am. I'm the nephew of Mr. Snodgrass, one of the best known men in this town, and if I put him after you he'll make it hot for you."

"But you won't put him after us!"

He puffed his cigar coolly, and again flicked off the ashes with his gemmed finger.

"Now, we'll give you three hundred dollars in cash, if you'll throw that match to-morrow. And we'll hold off from your Hindoo friend and let him work his little game, whatever it is. We're not interested in that, and don't care anything about it."

Reel stood in hesitation, as if he desired to go back into the town and at the same time feared to.

"What do you say? Three hundred to you, and we keep our mouths closed about what we know."

"I don't know what you want me to do—that is, how you want me to work it?"

"Now, that's better—a good deal better. You know the signals Cranford is to use, of course, for you're on the nine. Contrive a way by which you can transmit the signals to the captain of the Highland nine. The other members of the Highland nine needn't know anything about it—just you and the captain. You can meet him in the morning before the game. We'll fix that. And you and he can agree on your method."

He stopped and again took a pull at his cigar.

"Young man, I think you'd better accept it. It will be healthier for the Hindoo."

"I'm playing a straight game here!" Reel declared, almost desperately.

"Maybe. But the Hindoo isn't. And we're not sure that you are."

"I—I don't think I can go into this with you."

For the first time the man with the cigar showed im-

patience. He threw the half-smoked cigar to the ground.

"Come here in the morning at seven o'clock, and have your answer right; and that you may be sure to get it right, say to that Hindoo that my name is Blondin!"

He snapped out the words impatiently.

"That's all," he said; and he turned and walked back toward the town.

The other man followed him, and Reel heard them talking together, the tones seeming to indicate that the second man was trying to dissuade the first from some course on which he was determined.

"What did he mean by that?" Reel asked himself. "Blondin! I never heard the name."

He remained there until the men had disappeared; then he hastened to Snodgrass' home for an interview with the Hindoo.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GAME OPENS.

The game between Highland and Cranford was about to be called.

The people had gathered by hundreds, as they always did at Cranford when two baseball nines were to meet on the diamond.

Jack Lightfoot was there with his nine, which included Reel Snodgrass, and the Highland nine had appeared, led by Sol Russell.

Sol Russell was a comparatively new man in Highland, but he was a good baseball player and leader, and had been made captain of the nine, after it had gone to several defeats under the old captain.

It was reported that in Russell's hands it had become a splendid nine, and the Highland people were confident that it could to-day whip Cranford.

Jack Lightfoot looked with some interest at the captain of the rival team, and saw a smooth-faced, blue-eyed young man, who seemed to have all the physical energy needed. His manner was somewhat abrupt and harsh with his men, but he controlled them, and that was a thing much needed. Highland players were said to be a wild lot, and the former captain had not held them very well in subjection.

As for Russell, he was looking at Reel Snodgrass rather than at Jack Lightfoot, and Reel flushed under his rather steady gaze, as if he found it annoying.

Old Mr. Snodgrass had driven down to the grounds in his shining buggy, as was his custom, and he seemed to have gained much of his old-time manner, a thing Jack was glad to observe.

He spoke to Jack encouragingly, before the play began, in his customary, cheering way.

"You must win to-day, Jack! I'm more interested than ever, since Reelward has a place in the nine."

"We'll win to-day," Jack replied, knowing that a confident statement was what Snodgrass always wanted.

"That's right—that's right! When you say it that way I know you will do it. And Reelward is a pretty good player, Jack?"

"First rate," said Jack, feeling that he could say this quite truthfully.

"Ah! I'm glad to hear that. If I was a boy now—if I was a boy now, I'd be on your nine myself. Go in now, Jack, and do them up."

Jack felt that he was prepared to do that very thing, for his nine was in tiptop condition.

The line-up of the two teams was as follows:

HIGHLAND.

Perlie Hyatt, cf.
Sol Russell, p.
Tom Johnson, 3d b.
Bill Miller, lf.
Kit Carver, 1st b.
Ben Yates, 2d b.
Link Porter, rf.
Phin Hester, ss.
Cale Young, c.

CRANFORD.

Tom Lightfoot, rf.
Brodie Strawn, 1st b.
Phil Kirtland, c.
Ned Skeen, ss.
Lafe Lampton, 2d b.
Reel Snodgrass, 3d b.
Wilson Crane, cf.
Mack Remington, rf.
Jack Lightfoot, p.

There had already been some warming-up work, and a toss up had given choice of position to Highland, which they considered first blood, and they went to the bat, amid the encouraging cheers of the Highland rooters.

The important changes in the positions to be played by Jack's team was that Phil Kirtland was catcher, the position so long held by Lafe Lampton, and that Lafe was on second base now, and Tom Lightfoot in right field.

Of course it will be noticed that Reel occupied third

bag, the position which Jubal Marlin had held down heretofore, and held down very creditably.

Lafe had gone to second bag, giving up the catcher's position because the work was hard there, but chiefly because Phil Kirtland was crazy for the honor of being in the battery.

And Phil had shown himself to be a good catcher; so that Jack was willing to make the change, so long as Lafe was equally willing that it should be made.

Kirtland's vanity was thus flattered, so that he did not object to playing under the captaincy of Jack Lightfoot, and did less "kicking."

Jack, in managing a ball team, found that he had to consider things like this, if he wished to keep harmony in the organization.

Harmony helps to win games, and Jack was anxious to win.

The Cranford rooters broke forth again, when Perlie Hyatt, as the first batter up, faced Jack Lightfoot, who was in the pitcher's box.

Jack started in well, by striking out Hyatt—a thing that the Cranford enthusiasts greeted with cheers.

Then Jack's luck seemed to change.

He signaled to Phil that he would send a wide ball, just over the corner of the plate.

He sent it, with a sharp twist—but——

Crack!

Sol Russell caught it on the end of his long bat and sent it sailing.

Wilson Crane was not able to get it and field it in before Russell was on second bag.

Jack now signaled to the catcher that he would send a slow drop.

He sent it.

Crack!

Tom Johnson, a hard hitter, gathered that in on the end of his bat and lined it out.

It was another two-bagger, and Russell came over the home plate, while Johnson gained second.

Up in the grand stand sat the two men who have already been presented to the reader.

They smiled knowingly, when they beheld this work.

"I guess our money is safe," said one, in a whisper.

"Sure thing!" the other agreed. "We can't lose to-day."

Then Jack was hit again; and he only prevented another run by throwing out Tom Johnson at the home plate.

Kit Carver went out at first on a hot ball from short-stop, thus retiring the side.

"Gee!" said Jack, as he came in to the benches. "I don't know what's the matter with me this afternoon! I couldn't give them anything but that they got it. I must be losing my science. They seemed to know every time just what was coming and were ready for it."

"Oh, a bad start makes a good ending!" declared Lafe, hopefully. "You can't expect to strike men out all the time."

Russell had shown himself a good batter, and the Cranford boys who had never seen him in the box were anxious to see his work as pitcher.

But on the second ball in, Tom Lightfoot hammered him for one bag; and Brodie Strawn, following Tom, laced out a two, sending Tom to third, which was hopefully well on the way home.

Jack signaled now to Phil Kirtland to bunt down close to the plate.

This throwing away of a possible chance to bat the ball into the outfield was a thing Phil never liked to do, but with Brodie, his close friend and chum, on second, he was more willing than he otherwise would have been.

So he bunted, on an easy ball from the pitcher.

Tom, understanding the signal, had started for home before the bat and ball connected.

But the third baseman was right at his side; and, scooping up the ball, tossed it with a quick throw to the catcher, who had already run out on the line beyond the plate to get it.

It was cleverly done, and Tom was out, when it seemed that he ought to have gone home on that bunt.

Phil Kirtland was now on first and Brodie Strawn on third.

Ned Skeen came to the bat.

Anxious to bring Brodie in, but afraid of another bunt, Jack signaled to Skeen to place it in left field.

Jack now saw the left fielder move into position and assume an expectant attitude.

But Skeen, who was not the best batter on the nine, failed to make a place hit, and instead sent the ball off the tip of his bat into right.

Brodie came home on that; but Kirtland, forced to second, was put out.

Lafe Lampton came up to the plate with Old Wagon Tongue, and Lafe could always be depended on to do good work.

Jack made no signal to Lafe, and Lafe, getting a comparatively easy ball, slammed it into center.

Skeen took third and Lampton second.

Then—Reel Snodgrass hit up a high fly, which was caught, and the side went out.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TRAITOR ON THE DIAMOND.

When Jack Lightfoot went into the pitcher's box again, determined to overcome his "bad luck" by using all the skill at his command, he had little better success than before.

He tried swift balls and slow balls, drops, rises, in and outcurves, alternating with the spit ball.

He struck one man out, but the others hit him hard.

The second man was put out by a catch made by Tom Lightfoot, and the third went out on a hot throw which Jack himself made to first.

"Oh, that work was ragged!" he declared, speaking of what he had not been able to do in the box.

"But they got no runs," said Lafe, still encouragingly.

"No, but it wasn't the work of the pitcher that kept them from it."

"I think it was," Lafe insisted, "when you put two of the three men out yourself."

Yet Jack felt anything but elated.

The same bad luck attended the nine while they were at the bat.

Through several innings this thing continued, until the Highland nine had piled up four runs, while the Cranford nine could show but the one run made in the first.

Jack felt that he had never done such poor work in pitching, yet he had never tried harder to do effective business. The batters of the Highland nine seemed to be able to hit him almost at will. Only by using the eccentric and often unreliable spit ball could he do anything.

"I'll have to use nothing but the spit ball," he said, speaking to Lafe. "Everything else they seem to be ready and waiting for."

"Well, those fellows have certainly improved a lot since we played before!" was all Lafe could say.

As for the Highland nine and the rooters from that town they were hilarious and jubilant. They felt that the Cranford boys were on the run, and that the game was sure to go to Highland.

Up in the grand stand two young men sat smiling, and now and then whispering to each other.

"It's a singular thing to me," thought Jack, as he sat in the benches, watching one of his batters step into position. "It certainly is singular that if I happen to signal to a fellow to try to put the ball in any particular place the fielder at that point appears to get ready for it. I wonder if they have dropped to our signals?"

He had wondered about that before, and had watched the Highland boys, hoping to discover the truth.

Now he signaled to the batter to put a grass cutter close to short.

As he did so he noticed that Reel Snodgrass, who was sitting by him toying with a bat, up-ended the bat and began to poke at the ground with it.

Until that moment Jack had not suspected Reel Snodgrass.

Now he watched Reel closely, without appearing to do so.

He signaled to the next batter to try for a place hit in left.

Reel swung the bat round in his hands, merely as if he were playing with it; and Jack now observed that the pitcher for Highland, Sol Russell, was looking in the direction of the benches, and that Reel sat in the front row of benches.

A strange thrill of indignation shot through Jack Lightfoot when he observed these things.

But he was not yet sure of anything. All Reel's motions with the bat might mean nothing at all. He determined to watch further.

The side was out before Jack could settle the thing that was stirring him, and he went into the box.

Reel held down the bag at third, where he could readily see every signal and motion which Jack made to the catcher or to anyone else.

Without appearing to do so, Jack took a quick look at Reel at third just after giving his signal of whatever kind to Phil.

He discovered, in doing so, that whenever he signaled that he would send an outcurve Reel crossed his legs.

When Jack signaled that he would cut the corner of the plate or give a wide ball, Reel stood with his legs apart.

When the signal indicated to the catcher that a slow drop was coming Reel put up one hand as if scratching his face or his ear.

When a swift, sharp curve was to be given, Reel put up the other hand in much the same way.

For every signal that Jack had, he discovered that Reel had some movement of his legs, his arms, or his body.

Even now Jack was not ready to accuse Reel of treachery, for there was still a bare possibility that this was just chance. Reel might not intend anything by those shifts of position. And so long as Jack was not positive, he would not even mention the matter to any of his friends, for he was always scrupulously careful not to bring a charge against anyone he could not prove. He had already been given some lessons in that line, and had become even overcareful.

It seemed now that he was overcareful; for while he was prosecuting this investigation the game was going on, and the runs against Cranford were steadily mounting.

Again Cranford came to the bat.

Again they went into the field.

The score was now two for Cranford and five for Highland.

The Highland rooters were yelling their enthusiasm, certain that their team would win.

The Cranford enthusiasts were still cheering all they could for Cranford, but they began to feel that this was was not Cranford's day.

From the first the game had gone against Cranford.

There even began to be some mutterings against Jack; and Jack heard the disheartening words more than once—words that give pain to any pitcher:

"Take him out of the box—he's no good!"

Even Jack's best friends began to think he had lost his grip.

Jack kept his temper, used the spit ball all he could, and with splendid support from the fielders and the catcher tried to keep the score down.

CHAPTER IX.

JACK LIGHTFOOT'S DILEMMA.

Jack Lightfoot's indignation had finally reached the boiling point.

He had by careful watching proved to his own satisfaction that Reel Snodgrass was giving the signals to the Highland team.

He had observed that Sol Russell, the Highland captain and pitcher, watched closely every movement Reel made.

The members of the Highland team seemed to watch their captain, instead of Reel; so it was apparent that Russell was receiving the signals from Reel and then repeating them to the Highland players.

Thus it had come about that when Jack signaled to Phil Kirtland that he meant to pitch a low ball the man at the bat was ready to receive a low ball.

When Jack signaled that the ball would be wide out, or a drop, or an incurve, the batter was ready for it.

In the same way, when the Highland boys were in the field and Jack signaled to one of his batters to try to place a ball, or to steal a base, or any other thing, the Highland boys were ready for this particular hit or movement.

Instead of trying to do great work in the pitcher's box, Russell was letting the Cranford batters hit him and place the balls, knowing that his own men were ready for whatever hits came.

So it had come about that rather poor batters like Skeen, who were seldom able to get a place hit, were the best batters on the Cranford nine, so far as puzzling the opposition were concerned.

More than once when Skeen tried to put the ball in left it rolled off his bat and flew into right, and the left fielder, who was ready for it, had his effort for nothing.

Having seen just what was going on, Jack Lightfoot now found himself in a curious and unpleasant dilemma.

Mr. Snodgrass was desirous that Reel should be on the nine that day.

Snodgrass had often befriended Jack, and at times when Jack sorely needed a friend.

Snodgrass was one of Jack's most enthusiastic admirers.

It was as plain as anything could be that if Jack accused Reel Snodgrass of treachery and giving away the signals, Snodgrass would be offended.

Reel would, of course, deny the whole thing, would even become indignant and make ugly countercharges.

And the chances were great that Snodgrass would believe Reel and would disbelieve Jack.

Jack had the feeling that he could not afford to lose the good opinion of Mr. Snodgrass.

It seemed almost better to let the game be played out to the finish, and let Cranford lose, rather than forfeit the good will of such a friend.

But there was the team to be considered, and the people of Cranford, who trusted in him and believed in him.

To permit the game to go on in this way would be treachery to the Cranford nine and the Cranford people.

"But"—Jack compressed his lips in determination—"what is right is right! The fellow is a young scoundrel and traitor, and he ought to be exposed. If he isn't, the game is gone, and I will be really to blame. If I hadn't discovered it, the thing would be different. Now that I have discovered it there's nothing left for me to do but to act."

He now spoke to several members of the nine—to Lafe and Tom, to Ned Skeen, and to Brodie and Phil,

telling them of his discoveries and asking them to watch Reel Snodgrass and Sol Russell.

Suddenly Brodie, after watching a while, sprang at Reel Snodgrass with a tigerish leap, and caught him by the throat.

"You scoundrel!" he cried. "We're onto you! Now, you'll get off this diamond, or be kicked off."

He flung Reel upon the ground.

Reel staggered up, white-faced and panting.

"What do you mean?" he sputtered, apparently frightened.

Brodie faced him.

All the members of the nine and the substitutes gathered round these two.

"A fight!" somebody cried; and people came tumbling down from bleachers and grand stand, and the umpire came forward, while Kennedy, the watchman, appeared.

"You know what I mean," said Brodie, his dark face aflame. "You're a traitor. We've been watching you, and you've been repeating our signals to the Highland captain."

"You're a liar!" shouted Reel.

It was as Jack had feared. Reel was determined to deny it.

Brodie leaped at him, when that accusation was shouted, but Jack caught Brodie and held him back.

"That's not the way, Brodie!"

Then he, too, faced Reel.

"You're retired from the nine!" he declared.

"All right," said Reel. "I can stand it."

"What is it? What is it?" demanded Mr. Snodgrass, having heard something which showed that Reel was in trouble, as he pushed into the crowd.

Jack turned to the man who had often befriended him.

"Mr. Snodgrass, we're satisfied that Reel hasn't been playing fair by us—that he has been repeating our signals. I'll explain everything to you later. Just now the game must go on. Reel is retired from the game, and Bob Brewster goes in as his substitute."

"It's a lie—all a lie!" shouted Reel, facing Snodgrass.

Then he broke down, and, shaking with nervousness, seemed about to cry.

"Jack," said Snodgrass, giving Jack a look the latter could not forget for some time, "I'm astonished! I am sure that you are utterly mistaken, and——" he, too, trembled—"you haven't heard the last of this!"

He seemed about to conduct Reel to his buggy; but Reel, whose face was red and then white by turns, broke from him, and disappeared in the gathering crowd that thickened like flies round the speakers.

The two young men in the grand stand who had so far watched the progress of the game with the utmost satisfaction became excited when they beheld that commotion and gained some inkling of what had happened.

"The fool has been too bold and has been caught," one whispered.

They tumbled down from the seats, and, pushing into the crowd, made anxious inquiries.

"One of the nine turned traitor and gave the signals away," they heard a Cranford man explaining.

"But 'twasn't one of our boys?" some one asked.

"No, that young nephew of Snodgrass."

Sol Russell had come forward, and was indignantly denying the whole thing.

He declared that he had received no signals from anyone.

The members of his nine kept still.

They had not known that one of the members of the Cranford team was playing traitor. What they had thought was that their captain had in some manner learned the signals himself.

"Anyway, we're all right," said one of the young men to the other, as they climbed back to their seats. "Eight innings and a half have been played, and the score is now seven to two in Highland's favor. Cranford can't overcome that lead, no matter what they do. Let 'em kick. They can't prove anything, and they made the discovery so late that they've lost the game."

But had they lost the game?

That important question was to be settled.

Reel had disappeared.

And Mr. Snodgrass had left the ball grounds in anger.

CHAPTER X.

THE GAME GOES ON.

The Cranford nine went to the bat in the second half of the eighth inning with the score overwhelmingly against them—seven to two.

Yet they were more than ever filled with a determination to win the game.

"I was a fool in one thing," was the thought of Sol Russell, as he entered the pitcher's box. "Why didn't I make that idiot teach me the Cranford signals, instead of having him signal them to me? That certainly was the worst break I ever made! But I know some of them—more than half of them, and I'll take advantage of it."

But he had still a few things to learn.

Ned Skeen was the first name called by the umpire.

Ned fouled, and then fouled again, and finally struck out.

This was a very bad beginning, and Ned flushed as he threw down the bat and walked back to the benches.

"Howling mackerels, that was awful!" he confessed. "But I couldn't help it. He's throwing a different ball from what he did before."

This was true.

Up to this time Russell had not sought to do the very best he could as a twirler, relying rather on his fielders and the knowledge he had of Jack's signals.

But sturdy Lafe Lampton was the next batter called by the umpire, and Lafe was a sure, hard hitter.

He lounged to the rubber as if he felt too lazy to lift the bat, but when he stood in position his blue eyes were alert and he was ready for anything that came.

Russell sent him a swift in-shoot, and got a strike.

Then he gave Lafe a slow drop.

Lafe gathered it in, and it went into the outfield so deep that the fielder had to run for it.

Sprinting for first, and then on to second, no one who saw Lafe thus running would have thought he was the boy who had loafed so lazily up to the plate. Lafe was lazy in a good many things, but never so lazy that he was not equal to an emergency when it came to him.

Lafe did not stop until he rested securely on the second bag.

So far Jack had given no signal.

Now he signaled to Bob Brewster, as it seemed to Russell, to try to get a place hit in right.

Russell saw that signal and wig-wagged to the right fielder.

But here was where Russell was making a mistake.

Jack had shifted to a new set of signals, which the nine had used before and with which they were well acquainted.

What had seemed to Russell a signal for a hit into right field was really a signal for a hit into left field.

Jack smiled grimly, when he saw the right fielder get into position to receive that right-field hit, while the left fielder stood inattentively.

Jack rather doubted Bob Brewster's ability to make that place hit, yet he knew the good-natured, red-headed giant would make the best attempt he could.

Twice the ball came over.

Then——

Crack!

Brewster placed it deep in left field, to the amazement of the fielder, who was not looking for it, and to the disgust of the man in right, who was in position and ready to receive it.

On that deep-left place hit Lafe Lampton came home, and Bob Brewster gained second.

The encouraged Cranford fans tuned up, shaking out the little flags they had supplied themselves with and yelling to crack their throats. Grand stand and bleachers were a sea of waving color, as the fans screamed their joy.

"That batter did that by pure accident," was the thought of Sol Russell, who had not yet discovered that Jack had made a change of signals.

Long-legged Wilson Crane now poked his long nose over the rubber and held up Old Wagon Tongue.

Jack signaled for a place hit in right field, and Russell, again mistaken, thought it was for a grass cutter past third, and so signaled.

Wilson got his place hit, after being almost struck out.

But the right fielder was more wide awake this time,

and sent the ball so quickly to first that Wilson came near going out there.

Yet Bob Brewster had succeeded in gaining third.

Mack Remington now came to the rubber, and Jack was a bit afraid of Mack's batting abilities.

He signaled to Mack to bunt.

Russell wrongfully interpreted the signal to mean a hit past short.

He signaled to his fielders that the batter was to try for a hit past short, and he himself got ready to get the ball if it came near him.

The catcher, who had also observed Russell's repeated signal, looked for a ball to short, if the place hit was secured, and so was not prepared for a bunt.

In trying to get his hit Mack knocked a little fly.

It popped over into the midst of some spectators who had crowded too close to the diamond, but was still not foul.

The catcher had to run for it, and the spectators interfered with him, so that before he could secure the ball and get back to the rubber, Bob Brewster, who had come lunging in with the speed and force of a steam engine, was safe.

Wilson had gained second and was almost a third of the way to third, but the catcher threw to Russell and drove him back for safety.

Then Jack Lightfoot took up the timber, as his name was called by the umpire.

There was no better batter on the nine.

Russell knew that.

He watched Jack closely, to see the signal he gave to Wilson on second.

Wilson was playing off daringly, believing that Jack would be sure to get a hit.

Jack signaled that he would try for one in deep center.

Russell, still deceived by the change in the signals, took it to mean that he would try for a bounder down past second.

Hence, instead of getting back, the outfielders crept in, just the thing they should not have done.

Jack smiled to himself when he saw that.

He understood the situation, and knew how he had fooled Russell.

Russell was anxious, as a pitcher, to strike Jack out.

It would be something of a plume in his bonnet, if he could do that.

Hence he began to send in swift curves.

Jack let them go by, studying them, until two balls and one strike were called.

Then he connected.

Crack!

It was a terrific hit, right over the head of the center fielder, who had run in to back up the shortstop and the second baseman.

Ned Skeen popped to his feet like a jumping jack, wildly excited, while that glorious hit stirred the enthusiasm of every member of the nine, as well as the howling fans.

"Go! Oh, that was a beaut! Howling mackerels! Look at it! That fielder can't get it in a week!"

Jack was "going," and so was Macklin Remington and Wilson Crane.

Mack had been on first and Wilson on second. Wilson came home.

Mack Remington, crowding him hard, also came home.

Jack went to second, then to third.

Ned Skeen, who had run to third to coach, yelled for him to "go home!"

And Jack went, like lightning.

In bleachers and grand stand people were standing up, simply howling—howling.

The ball was coming in.

Sol Russell ran out to get it.

But when he turned with it to throw to the rubber, Jack had thrown himself in a slide and was safe.

Tom Lightfoot now sent a ball into right—and was caught out.

Brodie Strawn had two strikes called on him—an unusual thing for Brodie—and then pulled two bags.

Then—it was a sickening thud for his proud spirit—Phil Kirtland, in trying to make a place hit that would bring Brodie in, sent the leather straight into Russell's hands, and was out!

But what a change had been made in the score cards!

Now the score stood seven to seven.

The game was a tie.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NINTH INNING.

The Highland boys came to the bat in the opening of the ninth inning feeling rather queer.

They had gained their great lead not through superior playing, but through treachery, and now they had lost it.

The thing for them to do now was to get as many

Jack was in his room upstairs; and when his mother called up that Reel was in the yard, Jack asked him to come up into his room.

Reel looked confused and humiliated as he shuffled in, something like a peacock after its gaudy feathers have had a soaking in a rain storm.

He dropped into a chair almost without a word of greeting.

Jack sat down close by him, after giving him a friendly greeting.

"I want to tell you how that was," said Reel, in a low voice. "Of course you've made out a bad case against me, in your mind. But let me tell you how it was."

He looked at Jack keenly with his bright eyes, fairly boring him with them.

"All right," said Jack. "Go ahead. I'm quite willing to hear whatever you've got to say by way of explanation."

Reel began to talk in an apologetic tone.

But instead of beginning the explanation which Jack expected, he began to talk about the Hindoo and his marvelous skill as a magician. He told of the life of a wandering magician in India, and of his own life as he wandered from place to place with Boralmo.

It was a marvelously fascinating tale that he spun, whether true or false, and Jack was soon listening with the greatest interest.

According to Reel's story he had been pretty well all over India, encountering many strange people and meeting many queer adventures.

As he talked on Jack began to grow sleepy.

Noticing it, he tried to straighten up, but somehow the charm of Reel's words kept him from doing so, and he sat there in the chair while Reel continued his fascinating narrative. Then he struggled again, almost fiercely this time, but Reel's will overcame him.

After a little Reel arose with a strange smile on his face, and Jack sat still in the chair, staring as if at vacancy.

Taking from Jack's desk, near at hand, writing material, Reel put them in Jack's hands and told him to write, dictating the words:

"DEAR MR. SNODGRASS: I find that I was mistaken in what I said against Reel. He did not do the things I thought, and I beg your pardon and his for saying that he did."

Jack not only wrote this, but when Reel told him to he signed his name to it.

Reel put the slip of writing in his pocket, replaced the writing material where he had found it, and then went out of the house.

He spoke to Mrs. Lightfoot, in the hall below, saying that Jack was going to bed, and then he let himself out of the yard at the paling gate and hastened on uptown.

Jack still sat in the chair, without motion, after Reel's departure.

After half an hour had passed he struggled as if he were trying to arouse himself from sleep.

The fact that, on discovering he was falling asleep under the hypnotic influence of Reel's words and eyes, Jack had made a fierce struggle to throw off and overcome the influence, had kept Reel from succeeding as fully as he believed he had.

Jack was temporarily well under the influence which Reel had been able to exert.

He had again been taken unawares, and so had succumbed. But the resistance he had made bore now strange fruit.

He did not recover his ordinary wide-awake consciousness, but appeared to be in the telepathic state which sometimes accompanies the hypnotic trance.

This is the condition which clairvoyants are said to fall into when they see things that are otherwise unknowable.

Jack had some singular telepathic power now. He knew what had happened to him, though unable to cast it off. He knew that Reel Snodgrass had been there in the room and had thrown him into this condition. More than that, he felt that Reel contemplated something sinister and deadly, or that the Hindoo did, against Mr. Snodgrass.

He seemed to see Reel as he retreated up the street toward the Snodgrass residence. Whether this was telepathic seeing or merely his fancy that he saw Reel can hardly be known. It seemed to him real, at any rate.

With the feeling on him so strongly that the Hindoo meant harm to Mr. Snodgrass, Jack got out of his chair, put on his hat, and walked softly downstairs.

He was now like one who walks in his sleep. He looked straight ahead of him, as if he did not see anything, yet he opened and closed the lower door, went softly into the yard, and then on into the street.

His mother had retired, when Reel told her that Jack had gone to bed, and she knew nothing of the fact that her boy was now leaving the house.

When in the street Jack took the familiar path to the residence of Mr. Snodgrass.

As he hastened along he seemed to see Reel enter the house and go into the room where the Hindoo was. He knew the room, for he had been in it once himself. It was the bedroom which Snodgrass occupied very often, and adjoined the library, connecting with it by a curtained door, so that late at night, when tired of reading or writing, Snodgrass could slip in there and go to bed without disturbing anyone in the house.

Jack seemed to see Mr. Snodgrass in there, confronted by the Hindoo.

Reel did not appear to be present in this room now, and Jack did not now seem to know just what had become of him. But he saw, or thought he saw, the Hindoo very plainly, and the presence of the Hindoo in that room boded ill of some kind to Mr. Snodgrass.

With this feeling on him, Jack quickened his steps and was soon in front of the Snodgrass house.

The street was gloomy and the house was dark. All about the house and within it was silence.

If Jack had been in his normal and ordinary state of mind he would have stopped at the gate, for there was nothing to be seen or heard to create the least suspicion.

Yet he still believed he saw into that room. He seemed to be able to look right through the walls, his vision penetrating solid substances as the mysterious x-ray penetrates solids. Whether he saw anything or not, he had the feeling and the belief that he did.

A certain cunning caution came to him now.

He knew if he rang the bell that would arouse the house and warn everyone within of his presence. He chuckled as he thought how clever he was to think of that and to take precautions.

Hence, after passing through the gate, in doing which he made no more sound than if his feet were shod with velvet, he walked softly round the house until he approached the window which he knew opened into the bed chamber that adjoined the library.

At this point something seemed to snap in Jack's head. He reeled drunkenly, as if he were about to fall. He put his hands to his face, for a mist swam before his eyes and he felt giddy.

But instantly the feeling was gone.

Jack looked around.

He had come out of the hypnotic, sleep-walking trance, and was bewildered. At first he did not know

where he was, and he felt confused. Then he saw that he was in Snodgrass' yard. More, he saw that the window near which he stood was open. Beyond the window he heard strange words in some outlandish tongue—words that seemed to be muttered as if the speaker were talking to himself.

Then Jack recalled what had happened to him. The thing was as hazy as a half-remembered dream, but he recollected enough of it to enable him to understand how he came to be there in the darkness by that window.

The whole thing was so singular and uncanny that he felt himself trembling, while perspiration came out all over his body.

He began to wonder, too, what would be said if he were seen there.

The words he had heard now came again.

They showed impatience and irritability.

Then a tiny light flashed, coming from what appeared to be a small, electric torch.

By that light Jack saw the Hindoo down on his knees before Snodgrass' private safe, while Snodgrass himself lay stretched on the bed as if dead.

All Jack's fears for Mr. Snodgrass' safety, and the feeling that the Hindoo meant harm to him, came back.

Yet he hesitated, trembling.

He could not afford to make a mistake here.

He was about to run round to the front of the house and ring the bell for the purpose of summoning Mrs. Snodgrass or the servant.

Then he heard the Hindoo at the open window.

The light flashed again, and showed that the Hindoo bore some sort of bag in his hands.

The Hindoo let himself through the window, closed it softly after him, and turned as if to go.

Though he had no proof more than he had seen, Jack was as certain Borlmo had rifled the safe and now had its valuables in that bag as he had ever been of anything in his life.

At any rate, as he had seen the Hindoo slip softly out of the room, in this suspicious manner, Jack felt that he could with justice now interfere.

He stopped only for a moment to consider the danger to himself. It was great enough to have deterred most boys.

Then he called for help as loudly as he could, and threw himself upon the astonished Hindoo.

So sudden and unexpected was Jack's assault that the Hindoo tumbled back against the wall, dropping the bag out of his hands.

"Help!" Jack yelled, clutching the little, brown man by the throat. "Help! Help!"

His voice rang through the silent street.

The Hindoo, struggling and frantic with sudden fear, struck at his assailant with the knife he carried in his belted sash.

The keen blade ripped through Jack's coat, and its point scratched the skin.

Jack half released his hold and struck the knife hand a terrific blow with his fist.

The Hindoo struggled again and cried out strangely, while Jack clung to him and once more called for help.

Then the agile magician slipped out of his gaudy upper garment, as an onion peels out of its skin, and Jack fell back holding the garment in his hands while the Hindoo fled out into the darkness.

There were cries of alarm in the house and a patter of running feet on the street.

A light flashed in the bedroom, shining out into Jack's pallid face, and a shriek came from the lips of Mrs. Snodgrass.

Kennedy, the night watchman, came leaping into the yard, swinging club and revolver.

He saw Jack reeling and white in the light of the lamp from the window.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"Take this!" said Jack. "I'm going into this room!"

He tossed the garment to the bewildered watchman and sprang through the window.

Kennedy was about to follow, when Jack told him to pick up whatever he found on the ground by the window.

Within the room Jack found Mrs. Snodgrass bending over Snodgrass, who had come out of the hypnotic state into which the Hindoo had thrown him.

Jack came to the conclusion later that the cry which the Hindoo uttered had released Snodgrass from his singular trance.

The private safe of Mr. Snodgrass was open and the money it had held was gone.

Snodgrass was reeling as if he could not understand where he was or what had happened.

Mrs. Snodgrass begged him to lie back on the bed, insisting that he was sick.

"No, I'm not sick," he declared, "but I feel queer. Something's the matter with my head."

"Where is that Hindoo? Did he do that?" Mrs. Snodgrass asked, indicating the open safe.

Snodgrass stared at the safe.

"How did that get open?" he inquired.

"The Hindoo opened it," said Jack, "and I think he took whatever of value was in it. He had something in a bag, which he dropped when I tackled him. Mr. Kennedy now has that bag."

"And I've got a queer knife here, too," said Kennedy, now coming through the window.

Snodgrass was staring.

"The Hindoo?" he gasped. "What Hindoo?"

"Why, Snodgrass, are you crazy?" said his wife. "What Hindoo? That's a pretty question."

"Well, I say again, what Hindoo? What are you talking about?"

Then he remembered, hazily, as Jack had done, some of the many things that had occurred to him.

He had undoubtedly been hypnotized and induced to give up the combination of the safe. And he declared, later, that he must have been under hypnotic influence when he did some of the other queer things of which he had been guilty that week.

But he stuck to one thing, and that was that Reel Snodgrass must be his nephew, for he did have a brother who died in Bombay, leaving there a son, under the circumstances which the Hindoo and Reel had reported.

But Reel had vanished, too, with the Hindoo.

The money and other things taken from the safe were found in the bag.

The knife that had slashed Jack's coat and cut to the flesh Jack kept as a souvenir, while Snodgrass took possession of the queer East Indian garment which had dropped from Borlamo as he fled.

"It's a lucky thing he left these things," said Jack, speaking to Kennedy. "Otherwise there are people who might think I am lying and had something to do with robbing that safe myself. But I don't feel at all proud of what I did, when I remember how easily Reel threw me into that queer trance."

"But Reel will come back!" said Snodgrass, positively. "He is my nephew, I'm sure, and he'll come back. I don't believe that he had anything to do with this attempt at robbery. He'll come back!"

THE END.

Next week's issue is No. 19, and it is another capital baseball story, "Jack Lightfoot's Cyclone Finish; or, How Victory Was Snatched from Defeat." The baseball season is in full swing now, and nearly every boy in America is playing the great American game. And every boy will want to read and will be pleased with this baseball story.

A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. Besides answering the various letters and giving advice on athletics, we are publishing from week to week a short essay upon some timely topic, such as "How to pitch a drop ball," and other things that most boys desire to know, told in a manner that may be easily understood. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

PITCHING.

Once there was a young amateur ball player who did not want to be pitcher. That's a fairy story. Every real boy thinks that he is *the* pitcher, the coming pitcher of the game. There's something doing round the pitcher's box all the time, and every live American lad wants to be where there is something doing. Then, there is the fun of putting the other fellows out. As the Bowery boy said: "De pitcher's de cheese," every time. Most professional players were pitchers once before they took up work in other positions, and the captain of the amateur team usually finds everyone thinks he can pitch, and mighty few who are willing to play elsewhere, until they learn better.

If you want to pitch, ask yourself if you have fair control of the ball. Standing in the box, can you place the ball where you want it to go? If you can't, you'll have to learn how to before you can play ball in that position. Don't trouble your head about *speed*, but practice until you can hit your mark every time. And don't make the mistake of training yourself to hit a bull's-eye. The man behind the bat is not a target. Pitch to a catcher over some sort of a plate, a square of ground, a piece of board, a glove; aim to send the ball to the right, to the left, over the center. If you can, get some one to take the bat; but if you can't do that, practice over some sort of a plate. When you can place the ball where you want it to go, you've got control of the ball, and that means that you can pitch and have the batter at your mercy. Forget curves, unless you're left-handed, "south-armed," as the professionals call it; then, pitch to overcome that habit. A left-handed pitcher will do some queer stunts unless he has perfect mastery of the ball, and he must work hard and constantly until he is able to throw as straight and sure as the right-handed man. When you can control the ball, it's time enough to think of curves; many a good pitcher never uses these,

and many a great game was played before they ever were thought of. But first, last and all the time, the successful pitcher must be able to send the ball where he wants to, without the shadow of a doubt.

Don't pitch with your arm only. Learn to use every muscle of your shoulder and back. Lots of young players think all they have to do is to stand both feet flat on the ground and let the ball drive by the good strength of their biceps. It ruins the arm. Let your body swing with your arm, and when it comes to the throw you'll have the battery of swing, back, neck and shoulders behind the ball. Such play will not injure your control in the least and will save your arm.

Take care of your arm. That's your bank, and if you neglect it you may find yourself out of the game for good. Don't consider any indication of wrong as too trifling; if your arm aches, take a rest. The player who goes on the principle of always working is a fool. A little idleness is a good thing. Keep the arm protected, but not wrapped up. To wear bandages is to weaken the muscles and eventually lose power. Don't use advertised remedies, warranted to take away that tired feeling; many a professional player has burned all the life out of his muscles by trying such nostrums. Avoid them. Protect your pitching shoulder, too; constant exercise develops these muscles so highly that they become very sensitive to even slight draughts. Wear a piece of flannel for protection's sake. When your arm gets tired, rest it and rub it with witch hazel; let it soak in a warm bath now and again. When you can, give it a little massage or rubbing. With proper use of your body and these simple remedies when tired, and judicious rest, your arm will seldom trouble you.

Pitching is a big subject, and as our space for "Chat" is limited, further points in the pitcher's work, with a discussion of some of the season's plays, will be deferred to the two succeeding issues.

Will you please tell me what a boy of fourteen should measure and weigh to be just about the right thing? I am five feet four inches tall and tip the scales at a hundred and twenty-seven.

J. B. L.

Raleigh, N. C.

All we can say, my dear boy, is that you are evidently living on the fat of the land in your borough. Raleigh must be a healthy place to grow up in. You could easily knock off fifteen or seventeen pounds and still be in prime condition, for the proper weight of a young fellow of your height is something like one hundred and ten pounds. Still, it is difficult to tell with boys of your age, usually growing very rapidly. As to what your measurements should be in order to meet the requirements of ath-

letic development, we would say a girth of some 33 inches around the chest; 26 inches about the waist; hips, 33 inches; thighs, 19 inches, and calf, 13 inches, would about fill the bill. Take more exercise and reduce your weight, if you wish to be called an athlete. Fat is the deadly enemy to distinction in that line.

Perhaps you may think it a funny thing for me to say I felt glad Jack Lightfoot's team was beaten at baseball in a recent number of the ALL-SPORTS. An author, in my opinion, makes a big mistake when he has his hero always win in everything he attempts. Boys soon learn to look upon such a character as unreal, since it does not stand to reason. He must have his poor days, and take his "knocks" along with the rest. Of course every reader and admirer delights to see Jack come out ahead in the majority of his battles, though only through superior abilities and a shutting of his teeth together with a snap, rather than because luck favored him. Mr. Stevens seems to understand a boy's nature from the ground up, and I hope he will continue to give us such genuine stories of real "sport" as he has up to the present. We are not ashamed to be found reading the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY. Indeed, I take mine home openly, and the rest of the family are pretty nearly as much interested in the Cranford crowd as I am. I would like very much to see this in print, because I really think many boys believe just as I do about Jack. He's all right, and so are some of the other fellows. I think that Phil Kirtland would become quite a fine character if only he could throw off his desire for show, and wanting to play to the galleries.

Mt. Sterling, Ky.

DAVID R. COOK.

We rather think you will find that Mr. Stevens can be depended on to look out for his boys. He tells us that it is his desire to gradually develop the characters of several who figure in these stories, building them up by degrees, as they meet with trials and adventures in the wide field of sport, until he hopes his readers may have come to look upon them in the light of old friends, and gladly renew their acquaintance from week to week. And what you say about the rest of the family liking ALL-SPORTS pleases us because that is what we are trying to make it, a clean sheet, of which no lad need feel ashamed.

Is there any way in which I can increase my height? I am very sensitive about being undersized, and would go to a great deal of trouble if in some way I could only grow faster. I am fourteen.

A Boy.

Now we fear you have put us "in a hole," so to speak. You remember the Good Book declares most positively that in no wise may a man increase his stature even one cubit. All we can say is that there seems to be plenty of hope for you. At fourteen we have seen many lads who appeared to be stunted in their growth when, in fact, they had not as yet reached the growing age. Meeting them a few years later we found them husky young giants. Keep cheerful, exercise freely, feed well, and above all, avoid the use of stimulants and tobacco, for these do more to retard the natural growth of young fellows than all other agencies combined.

I write in connection with your publications. They are taking right along in my town, considering what a short time it has been since they made their appearance. My first order of two copies for each has been increased to eight. They are, indeed, all that you claim for them. How about an applause column for ALL-SPORTS? We could then tell who the readers were all over the country. I am a reader of, as well as a dealer in, your publications. I like to sell good books to boys, and I think ALL-SPORTS the best on the market.

Ripley, Miss.

J. R. BAINS,

Manager "Little Bonanza News Company."

Those are cheery words, and we thank you, friend Bains, for the deep interest that you have taken in ALL-SPORTS, both as a reader and a selling agent. You evidently know about what the boys want, and what will do the most good in making them more vigorous, manly and generous-hearted. We hope to grow in time; but, after all, it is quality, not quantity, that counts, and our best efforts will be directed toward excelling all others in the class of material we offer the great reading public of "coming men of America."

I see you have opened a department where the readers of ALL-SPORTS can have a friendly chat once a week, and perhaps compare notes in connection with athletic matters. That is as it should be. I have always thought that such a thing drew the readers of a boys' paper closer, and aroused a greater interest in what was going on. I confess that I'm a great admirer of your publication. In the first place, the stories please me, being just the kind I've always liked. Then again, I find that I can pick up many useful hints in connection with things athletic, to which my fancy seems to run. And now that you have found it necessary to open an applause and athletic department in order to answer the many letters received, my joy is complete. Count on me to stand by you right along, and more than that, I think every boy who enjoys ALL-SPORTS should feel it his duty to interest his comrades. I've already influenced three fellows to take it, and every time they see me they declare it's all I boomed it up to be. By the way, is my weight up to the standard for a young fellow standing five feet six in his socks? I tip the scales at a hundred and twenty-three pounds. Thanking you in advance, and hoping that I may see this in the Chat columns soon,

CHATZ G. BROWN.

Rahway, N. J.

We think you present our case very strongly, friend Chatz; and can only repeat once more our assertion that we feel confident of being able to influence any lad for the better who becomes a constant reader of ALL-SPORTS. By this we mean both morally and physically. While Jack and his chums do not pose as saints, but healthy boys, prone to stumble and even fall at times, they have high aims and ambitions, and seek to elevate themselves as they move along their appointed path in life. And we warmly thank you for spreading the fame of ALL-SPORTS among your friends. Such missionary work is the best evidence of your deep interest in the success of your favorite paper. As to your weight, you seem to be pretty close to the average, only a couple of pounds too heavy.

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